

Minutes for the CPC Meeting of Jan. 27, 2005, 7:30 pm- 11:00 pm, Library Meeting Room

Attending:

Peter Berry, Walter Foster, Bob Coan, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Catherine Coleman, Nancy Tavernier, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Andy Magee, Matt Lundberg (8:30 pm), Roland Bartl

Audience:

Anne Forbes, Anne Fanton, John Ryder, Terra Friedrichs, Bill Mullin, Tom Dunn, Dave Wilson

Approval of Minutes of December 2 & 16, 2004; January 13, 2005:

The minutes of Dec. 2 and 16 were approved as amended by Andy Magee and Nancy Tavernier respectively, and the minutes of Jan. 13 were unanimously approved.

Open Space Set Aside

- Andy proposed the \$300,000 allocation figure (though he favors a higher number). He chose the figure \$300,000 to avoid arriving at the number by default after the funds had been allocated to various proposals. He suggested as we go through the spread sheets, we can see if it's possible to reduce some other allocations to make this one work.

- Adding \$300,000 will increase the open space fund to \$500,000. In a couple more years the fund could reach \$+1 million, and if we had a project, that figure would make it easier for us to come up with additional funding.

It was commented that there is strong support for putting money aside for open space purchases.

It was commented that it doesn't appear that the Committee could bond due to controversy. On the other hand, it was suggested that it's only a small fraction of residents who oppose bonding and that it could be explained at Town Meeting that it's a common way to purchase land.

It was commented that the committee should decide beforehand how much to put in each "bucket" and that open space and recreation can be viewed as the same bucket. Open space should be the biggest bucket without shortchanging the other areas.

It was commented that some CP Committees make a 4th bucket for Recreation. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Morrison Farm Feasibility Study can be considered to represent both open space and recreation. Politically residents are interested in seeing the open space bucket as a large one.

Walter did not agree that the town passed the CPA primarily as a means of funding open space purchase as other areas are equally important. He supports the \$300,000 figure, but would like to see a group present an open space proposal for next year.

It was commented that having \$70,000 from last year's CPA funds unencumbered will be helpful and that it would be nice from some funds to remain unencumbered this year so they can be directed to any bucket.

- A committee member commented that she assumed that the open space set aside figure will not be finalized until after first and second cuts.

- She believes that bonding is worth the risk and that bonding can be done in small increments so that the committee will be available and can articulate the interest.
- More support for the \$300,000 figure was added.
- It was commented that we could look to Carlisle as a model for open space funding where they set aside all their CPA funds since 2001 which amounted to \$1 million and combined it with bonding and fundraising to acquire a 48 acre parcel of land which is intended to be used to satisfy three CPA funding areas.

Public Comments:

Anne Fanton stated she is pleased that the committee is proposing \$300,000 as the open space set aside, and she urged the committee not to go lower. She stated that if an open space parcel becomes available that residents expect CPA funding to be adequate to address the issue; she expressed concern that the CPA funds will come up short. Anne commented that reconstituting the Open Space Committee will be very important, and that the committee needs to be proactive. She is concerned that the committee is funding Recreation too heavily.

Andy Magee commented that Open Space is the only area not represented by a town sponsored committee. The ConsCom is working at capacity and cannot fulfill this need; however, the ConsCom and the BoS endorsed reconstituting an Open Space Committee which will operate as a subcommittee of the ConsCom. Such a committee will act as a liaison between the Acton Conservation Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and the town to advise the selectmen on 61A parcels.

Peter Berry added that it's not just large parcels that would be considered, but smaller parcels as well. If necessary the Committee could call a Special Town Meeting to spend the open space set aside fund for a small parcel. He added that Conservation Restrictions represent another land preservation option.

Walter Foster interjected that Acton is currently at a 1.5% property tax surcharge, and he would like to advocate raising our surcharge to 3% when there is a good opportunity, as the town could realize \$2 million of CPA funds/year which would make it easier to accomplish our goals.

Terra Friedrichs asked if the town voted to increase the property tax surcharge, can the town vote to restrict how the funds are used.

Walter indicated that would not be possible; however, one could take a sense of the meeting and if appropriate take 80% of CP funds and put it in one category.

Terra commented that creating a significant open space set aside will regain residents' support for the CPA as she feels it's languishing.

Andy replied that open space funding is a priority, but the committee must fund other areas as it is a requirement for adopting the CPA.

Anne Forbes commented the CP fund can accept gifts. She asked if one can donate to the CP fund for a specific purpose such as acquisition of land and/or make a large donation in one's will, etc.

Peter Berry commented that he believes that is possible to move to a more organized campaign to go out to the public to bring support toward open space acquisition. The town and the CPC are tax exempt and therefore offer tax benefits.

- Bill Mullin reminded those at the meeting that Open Space and Recreation work well together as a coalition, and that it would be unfortunate to see it broken. The coalition worked together to attempt purchase of the Robbins Mill Pond Land. The key to successful purchase of large parcels will be working together with Recreation.

- He also commented that when a large open space acquisition is made, it won't be because the Committee set aside 80% of its resources in one year; it will be because of bonding capacity.

John Ryder echoed Bill's comments and added that Open Space and Recreation are two sides of the same coin. Open space represents scenic vistas, soccer, walking, etc. He advocates that we don't close off our public lands from active recreation. He commented that as a FinCom member speaking for himself that until John Murray, Town Treasurer, is comfortable issuing general revenue bonds, it will be difficult for the FinCom to approve bonding.

- Andy commented that that issue important but can be resolved when the specific case is in front of us.

- Re: gifts, in the legislation, Section 9.... states, "The fund shall consist of all revenues received by the commonwealth: (1) under the provisions of section 8; (2) from public and private sources as gifts, grants and donations to further community preservation programs." This section doesn't state whether or not a gift can be earmarked.

ACTION: Ask the CP Coalition about this.

Committee Brainstorm re: Strengths and Weaknesses of Proposals for Funding (lack of time did not permit public comments)

Habitat Home

- Compensation for town land??
- Poor organizational status in Acton
- Needs more leveraging
- No firm idea on land
- Ripe?
- Lack of solid plan
- Take up next year?
- Competent group
- No site control
- Unencumbered \$\$ for it
- Should be able to get land donated?
- More units

Town Hall Slate Roof

- Eligible
- Urgent
- No other funding available
- Contingency/escalation factors?
- Competence
- Important landmark
- Postponing costs for \$\$

Pine Hawk Display

- Historic value - different aspect (pre-American history)
- Good model
- Travel - able
- Leverage \$\$? Should be able to.
- Lose it if we don't fund
- Location?
- Educational value
- Could wait a little
- Pre-project publicity?

Antique Fire Apparatus

- Highly leveraged
- Pride
- Bargain
- Competency?/expert support
- Best operation standards??
- More public display/use.
- How to ensure historic specification?
- Educational tool
- Time line for completion?

BFRT Start-Up

- Supports many forms of recreation
- Connects/re-connects
- Competence
- Highly leveraged
- Feasibility
- Volunteer support/wide support
- In Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Rt. 2A overpass
- Friends of BFRT can fund raise and contribute in other ways
- High value return

AHA - McCarthy Village Recreation Area

- Meets criteria
- Needed - nothing else in area
- Too little detail/specifics; not well thought out
- Expensive?? or not???
- Urgency??
- Little budget detail
- Would like to see low-income housing proposals
- No other use of land possible
- No \$\$ leveraged

- Leveraging may not be appropriate to expect
 - All of public housing is leveraged.
- Proven track record in managing \$\$

Jones Tavern Chimney (Iron Work Farm)

- Consistent with plan
- No leveraged funds
- Critical for building integrity
- Want revised estimate
- Enable more public access/educational programs?
- Need 10% historic funding
- Capacity to do project?
- Adequate cost documentation
- Only one estimate so far
- Like to see Jones Tavern capital plan
- MHC historic preservation restriction is there

Civil War Artifacts (Acton Memorial Library)

- Some matching funds leveraged
- Educational value in display
- May encourage more \$ contribution
- May encourage more artifact contributions
- Spurs more interest in Acton Memorial Library
- Adds public traffic in old library section
- Not as critical
- Display master plan?

Leary Field

- Funds leveraged significant
- 3-legged stool
- Intra-municipal agreement in place
- Short construction
- Relieves pressure on open space (3 in 1)
- Second go-around - well vetted
- Much support
- Saves \$\$ in field maintenance
- Legal issues resolved

ACHC Community Housing Program Fund

- Includes administrative funding request
- New trust fund law - opportunity to manage housing funds
- Need 10% for housing
- Proven track record/confidence

Faulkner Plaque

- Nothing too big or too small

Administrative Fund

- 5%
- It was agreed to ask for a narrative description of admin. costs for accounting purposes.

Meeting schedule:

Next meeting, Feb. 8: Recommend funding allocations

It was agreed to ask for 15 minutes on the Fin Com meeting agenda for Feb. 8 and for 15 minutes on the Selectmen's Agenda for Feb. 7. The purpose is to have the BoS and FinCom review the preliminary funding allocations to target any red flags/issues before taking the final vote on Feb. 15.

Walter commented that the Selectmen voted to support each proposal so it's not necessary to meet with them except for purposes of visibility and public relations, which the committee agreed is important.

John Ryder commented that he has kept the FinCom apprised of the Committee's deliberations and reminded the committee that the FinCom voted to support FOLF.

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Mitchell-Hardt